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It's March Madness at South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center

PIERRE, S.D. -- March means one-thing to many South Dakotans – state basketball tournament time! There is a new display case entitled “*March Madness: South Dakota Style*” on exhibit at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

The display highlights the history of state high school basketball tournaments. This small exhibit includes artifacts and photos from the collection of the South Dakota State Historical Society of both boys and girls high school teams. Some of the artifacts included are jerseys, awards, programs and pennants. The exhibit is located just inside the museum gallery entrance, and will be up until September.

“South Dakota has a rich tradition of high school basketball,” said Jay Smith, museum director. “The new display presents a great opportunity for us to showcase some of the museum’s collection of basketball memorabilia. Our collection is unfortunately small, however, so we are hoping to generate interest among our visitors in making donations of basketball-related artifacts used in our great state.”

Few events in South Dakota generate as much electric excitement as the state basketball tournaments. With community pride on the line, nearly the entire population of some towns trek to the tournament to display their school spirit – proving each season that high school basketball is one of the most, if not the most, popular sports in the state.

Basketball made its way to South Dakota shortly after Dr. James Naismith invented the game in 1891, according to research by the State Historical Society. It is unclear when the first game took place in South Dakota, but in Sioux Falls, the first recorded game occurred in 1894. It was played at the YMCA in January 1894. The game lasted 12 periods. It was a high scoring affair, ending at a score of 7-5! Ten players competed on each side, supervised/coached by D.G. Holbrook. The Evening Argus Leader reported this in its Jan. 11, 1894 edition.

Schools soon began offering basketball as an extracurricular activity.

Competitive high school basketball in South Dakota began as a one-class system, going to a two-class system in 1936, and finally in 1986 to the three-class format used today. School size determines the distinction between Classes AA, A and B, with the largest schools making up the AA teams. Sanctioned state tournaments began in 1912.

The tournaments were exclusively for male athletes until 1975, when the first girls tournament was organized. Girls had been playing basketball for decades previously in South Dakota, but the passage of the Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act in 1972,

more commonly known as "Title IX," opened the door for young women across the state and the nation to compete in organized sports.

If you are interested in donating artifacts or records about basketball or other topics in South Dakota history to the State Historical Society, please contact Dan Brosz, curator of collections, at (605) 773-6013, or Matthew Reitzel, manuscript archivist, at (605) 773-3615.

Editor's Note: The attached photo is of the 1912 Lake Preston boys basketball team that took second place in that year's first state tournament, losing 33-25 to Redfield. (Photo courtesy of South Dakota State Historical Society-Archives)

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The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council, and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.